Lies of Notovitch, The Unknown Life of Christ.

The Nineteenth Century, 36 (July-December 1894) pp. 515-522

THE ALLEGED SOJOURN OF CHRIST IN INDIA [1]

Aeneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius the Second, 1458-64, when on a visit to England, was anxious to see with his own eyes the barnacle geese that were reported to grow on trees, and, being supposed to be vegetable rather than animal, were allowed to be eaten during Lent. He went as far as Scotland to see them, but when arrived there he was told that he must go further, to the Orchades, if he wished to see these miraculous geese. He seemed rather provoked at this, and, complaining that miracles would always flee further and further, he gave up his goose chase *(didicimus miracula semper remotius fugere).*

Since his time, the number of countries in which miracles and mysteries could find a safe hiding-place has been much reduced. If there were a single barnacle goose left in the Orchades, i.e. the Orkney Islands, tourists would by this time have given a good account of it. There are few countries left now beyond the reach of steamers or railways, and if there is a spot never trodden by a European foot, that is the very spot which is sure to be fixed upon by some adventurous members of the Alpine Club for their next expedition. Even Central Asia and Central Africa are no longer safe, and, hence, no doubt, the great charm which attaches to a country like Tibet, now almost the only country some parts of which are still closed against European explorers. It was in Tibet, therefore, that Madame Blavatsky met her Mahâtmas, who initiated her in the mysteries of Esoteric Buddhism. Mr. Sinnet claims to have followed in her footsteps, but has never described his or her route. Of course, if Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Sinnet had only told us by what passes they entered Tibet from India, at what stations they halted, and in what language they communicated with the Mahâtmas, it would not be courteous to ask any further questions. That there are Mahâtmas in India and Tibet no one would venture to deny. The only doubt is whether these real Mahâtmas know, or profess to know, anything beyond what they can, and what we can, learn from their sacred literature. If so, they have only to give the authorities to which they appeal for their esoteric knowledge, and we shall know at |516 once whether they are right or wrong. Their Sacred Canon is accessible to us as it is to them, and we could, therefore, very easily come to an understanding with them as to what they mean by Esoteric Buddhism. Their Sacred Canon exists in Sanskrit, in Chinese, and in Tibetan, and no Sacred Canon is so large and has at the same time been so minutely catalogued as that of the Buddhists in India, China, or Tibet.

But though certain portions of Tibet, and particularly the capital (Lassa), are still inaccessible, at least to English travellers from India, other portions of it, and the countries between it and India, are becoming more and more frequented by adventurous tourists. It would therefore hardly be safe to appeal any longer to unknown Mahâtmas, or to the monks of Tibetan monasteries, for wild statements about Buddhism, esoteric or otherwise, for a letter addressed to these monasteries, or to English officials in the neighbourhood, would at once bring every information that could be desired. "Where detection was so easy, it is almost impossible to believe that a Russian traveller, M. Notovitch, who has lately published a 'Life of Christ' dictated to him by Buddhist priests in the Himis Monastery, near Leh, in Ladakh, should, as his critics maintain, have invented not only the whole of this *Vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ,* but the whole of his journey to Ladakh. It is no doubt unfortunate that M. Notovitch lost the photographs which he took on the way, but such a thing may happen, and if an author declares that he has travelled from Kashmir to Ladakh one can hardly summon courage to doubt his word. It is certainly strange that letters should have been received not only from missionaries, but lately from English officers also passing through Leh, who, after making careful inquiries on the spot, declare that no Russian gentleman of the name of Notovitch ever passed through Leh, and that no traveller with a broken leg was ever nursed in the monastery of Himis. But M. Notovitch may have

travelled in disguise, and he will no doubt be able to prove through his publisher, M. Paul Ollendorf, how both the Moravian missionaries and the English officers were misinformed by the Buddhist priests of the monastery of Leh. The monastery of Himis has often been visited, and there is a very full description of it in the works of the brothers Schlagintweit on Tibet.

But, taking it for granted that M. Notovitch is a gentleman and not a liar, we cannot help thinking that the Buddhist monks of Ladakh and Tibet must be wags, who enjoy mystifying inquisitive travellers, and that M. Notovitch fell far too easy a victim to their jokes. Possibly, the same excuse may apply to Madame Blavatsky, who was fully convinced that her friends, the Mahâtmas of Tibet, sent her letters to Calcutta, not by post, but through the air, letters which she showed to her friends, and which were written, not on Mahâtmic paper and with Mahâtmic ink, but on English paper and |517 with English ink. Be that as it may, M. Notovitch is not the first traveller in the East to whom Brâhmans or Buddhists have supplied, for a consideration, the information and even the manuscripts which they were in search of. Wilford's case ought to have served as a warning, but we know it did not serve as a warning to M. Jacolliot when he published his *Bible dans l'Inde* from Sanskrit originals, supplied to him by learned Pandits at Chandranagor. Madame Blavatsky, if I remember rightly, never even pretended to have received Tibetan manuscripts, or, if she had, neither she nor Mr. Sinnet have ever seen fit to publish either the text or an English translation of these treasures.

But M. Notovitch, though he did not bring the manuscripts home, at all events saw them, and not pretending to a knowledge of Tibetan, had the Tibetan text translated by an interpreter, and has published seventy pages of it in French in his *Vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ.* He was evidently prepared for the discovery of a Life of Christ among the Buddhists. Similarities between Christianity and Buddhism have frequently been pointed out of late, and the idea that Christ was influenced by Buddhist doctrines has more than once been put forward by popular writers. The difficulty has hitherto been to discover any real historical channel through which Buddhism could have reached Palestine at the time of Christ. M. Notovitch thinks that the manuscript which he found at Himis explains the matter in the simplest way. There is no doubt, as he says, a gap in the life of Christ, say from his fifteenth to his twenty-ninth year. During that very time the new Life found in Tibet asserts that Christ was in India, that he studied Sanskrit and Pâli, that he read the Vedas and the Buddhist Canon, and then returned through Persia to Palestine to preach the Gospel. If we understand M. Notovitch rightly, this Life of Christ was taken down from the mouths of some Jewish merchants who came to India immediately after the Crucifixion (p. 237). It was written down in Pâli, the sacred language of Southern Buddhism; the scrolls were afterwards brought from India to Nepaul and Makhada (*quaere* Magadha) about 200 a.d. (p. 236), and from Nepaul to Tibet, and are at present carefully preserved at Lassa. Tibetan translations of the Pâli text are found, he says, in various Buddhist monasteries, and, among the rest, at Himis. It is these Tibetan manuscripts which were translated at Himis for M. Notovitch while he was laid up in the monastery with a broken leg, and it is from these manuscripts that he has taken his new Life of Jesus Christ and published it in French, with an account of his travels. This volume, which has already passed through several editions in France, is soon to be translated into English.

There is a certain plausibility about all this. The language of Magadha, and of Southern Buddhism in general, was certainly Pâli, and Buddhism reached Tibet through Nepaul. But M. Notovitch ought to |518 have been somewhat startled and a little more sceptical when he was told that the Jewish merchants who arrived in India immediately after the Crucifixion knew not only what had happened to Christ in Palestine, but also what had happened to Jesus, or Issa, while he spent fifteen years of his life among the Brâhmans and Buddhists in India, learning Sanskrit and Pâli, and studying the Vedas and the Tripi*t*aka. With all their cleverness the Buddhist monks would have found it hard to answer the question, how these Jewish merchants met the very people who had known Issa as a casual student of Sanskrit and Pâli in India ----for India is a large term----and still more, how those who had known Issa as a simple student in India, saw at once that he was the same person who had been put to death under Pontius Pilate. Even his name was not quite the same. His name in India is said to have been *Issa,* very like the Arabic name *Isâ'l Masîh,* Jesus, the Messiah, while, strange to say, the name of Pontius Pilate seems to have remained unchanged in its passage from Hebrew to Pâli, and from Pâli to Tibetan. We must remember that part of Tibet was converted to Mohammedanism. So much for the difficulty as to the first composition of the Life of Issa in Pâli, the joint work of Jewish merchants and the personal friends of Christ in India, whether in Sind or at Benares. Still greater, however, is the difficulty of the Tibetan translation of that Life having been preserved for so many centuries without ever being mentioned. If M. Notovitch had been better acquainted with the Buddhist literature of Tibet and China, he would never have allowed his Buddhist hosts to tell him that this Life of Jesus was -well known in Tibetan literature,

though read by the learned only. We possess excellent catalogues of manuscripts and books of the Buddhists in Tibet and in China. A complete catalogue of the Tripitaka or the Buddhist Canon in Chinese has been translated into English by a pupil of mine, the Rev. Bunyiu Nanjio, M.A., and published by the Clarendon Press in 1883. It contains no less than 1,662 entries. The Tibetan Catalogue is likewise a most wonderful performance, and has been published in the *Asiatic Researches*, vol. xx., by Csoma Körösi, the famous Hungarian traveller, who spent years in the monasteries of Tibet and became an excellent Tibetan scholar. It has lately been republished by M. Féer in the *Annales du Musée Guimet.* This Catalogue is not confined to what we should call sacred or canonical books, it contains everything that was considered old and classical in Tibetan literature. There are two collections, the Kandjur and the Tandjur. The Kandjur consists of 108 large volumes, arranged in seven divisions:

1. Dulva, discipline (Vinaya).

2. Sherch'hin, wisdom (Pra*g*nâpâramitâ).

3. P'hal-ch'hen, the garland of Buddhas (Buddha-avata*n*saka).

4. Kon-tségs, mountain of treasures (Ratnakû*t*a).

5. Mdo, or Sûtras, aphorisms (Sûtrânta). |519

6. Myang-Hdas, or final emancipation (Nirvâ*n*a).

7. Gryut, Tantra or mysticism (Tantra).

'The Tandjur consists of 225 volumes, and while the Kandjur is supposed to contain the Word of Buddha, the Tandjur contains many books on grammar, philosophy, &c, which, though recognised as part of the Canon, are in no sense sacred.

In the Tandjur, therefore, if not in the Kandjur, the story of Issa ought to have its place, and if M. Notovitch had asked his Tibetan friends to give him at least a reference to that part of the Catalogue where this story might be found, he would at once have discovered that they were trying to dupe him. Two things in their account are impossible, or next to impossible. The first, that the Jews from Palestine who came to India in about 35 a.d. should have met the very people who had known Issa when he was a student at Benares; the second, that this Sutra of Issa, composed in the first century of our era, should not have found a place either in the Kandjur or in the Tandjur.

It might, of course, be said, Why should the Buddhist monks of Himis have indulged in this mystification?----but we know as a fact that Pandits in India, when hard pressed, have allowed themselves the same liberty with such men as Wilford and Jacolliot; why should not the Buddhist monks of Himis have done the same for M. Notovitch, who was determined to find a Life of Jesus Christ in Tibet? If this explanation, the only one I can think of, be rejected, nothing would remain but to accuse M. Notovitch, not simply of a *mauvaise plaisanterie,* but of a disgraceful fraud; and that seems a strong measure to adopt towards a gentleman who represents himself as on friendly terms with Cardinal Rotelli, M. Jules Simon, and E. Renan.

And here I must say that if there is anything that might cause misgivings in our mind as to M. Notovitch's trustworthiness, it is the way in which he speaks of his friends. When a Cardinal at Rome dissuades him from publishing his book, and also kindly offers to assist him, he hints that this was simply a bribe, and that the Cardinal wished to suppress the book. Why should he? If the story of Issa were historically true, it would remove many difficulties. It would show once for all that Jesus was a real and historical character. The teaching ascribed to him in Tibet is much the same as what is found in the Gospels, and if there are some differences, if more particularly the miraculous element is almost entirely absent, a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church would always have the tradition of the Church to rest on, and would probably have been most grateful for the solid historical framework supplied by the Tibetan Life.

M. Notovitch is equally uncharitable in imputing motives to the late M. Renan, who seems to have received him most kindly and to have offered to submit his discovery to the Academy. M. Notovitch |520 says that he never called on Renan again, but actually waited for his death, because he was sure that M. Renan would have secured the best part of the credit for himself, leaving to M. Notovitch nothing but the good luck of having discovered the Tibetan manuscript at Himis. Whatever else Renan was, he certainly was far from jealous, and he would have acted towards M. Notovitch in the same spirit with which he welcomed the discoveries which Hamdy Bey lately made in Syria on the very ground which had been explored before by Renan himself. Many travellers who discover manuscripts, or inscriptions, or antiquities, are too apt to forget how much they owe to good luck and to the spades of their labourers, and that, though a man who disinters a buried city may be congratulated on his devotion and courage and perseverance, he does not thereby become a scholar or antiquary. The name of the discoverer of the Rosetta stone is almost forgotten, the name of the decipherer will be remembered for ever.

The worst treatment, however, is meted out to the missionaries in Tibet. It seems that they have written to say that M. Notovitch had never broken his leg or been nursed in the monastery of Himis. This is a point that can easily be cleared up, for there are at the present moment a number of English officers at Leh, and there is the doctor who either did or did not set the traveller's leg. M. Notovitch hints that the Moravian missionaries at Leh are distrusted by the people, and that the monks would never have shown them the manuscript containing the Life of Issa. Again I say, why not? If Issa was Jesus Christ, either the Buddhist monks and the Moravian missionaries would have seen that they both believed in the same teacher, or they might have thought that this new Life of Issa was even less exposed to objections than the Gospel story. But the worst comes at the end. 'How can I tell,' he writes, 'that these missionaries have not themselves taken away the documents of which I saw the copies at the Himis monastery?' But how could they, if the monks never showed them these manuscripts? M. Notovitch goes even further. 'This is simply a supposition of my own,' he writes, 'but, if it is true, only the copies have been made to disappear, and the originals have remained at Lassa. ... I propose to start at the end of the present year for Tibet, in order to find the original documents having reference to the life of Jesus Christ. I hope to succeed in this undertaking in spite of the wishes of the missionaries, for whom, however, I have never ceased to profess the profoundest respect.' Any one who can hint that these missionaries may have stolen and suppressed the only historical Life of Christ which is known to exist, and nevertheless express the profoundest respect for them, must not be surprised if the missionaries and their friends retaliate in the same spirit. We still prefer to suppose that M. Notovitch, like Lieutenant Wilford, like M. Jacolliot, like Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Sinnet, was duped. |521 It is pleasanter to believe that Buddhist monks can at times be wags, than that M. Notovitch is a rogue.

All this, no doubt, is very sad. How long have we wished for a real historical life of Christ without the legendary halo, written, not by one of his disciples, but by an independent eye-witness who had seen and heard Christ during the three years of his active life, and who had witnessed the Crucifixion and whatever happened afterwards? And now, when we seemed to have found such a Life, written by an eye-witness of his death, and free as yet from any miraculous accretions, it turns out to be an invention of a Buddhist monk at Himis, or, as others would have it, a fraud committed by an enterprising traveller and a bold French publisher. We must not lose patience. In these days of unexpected discoveries in Egypt and elsewhere, everything is possible. There is now at Vienna a fragment of the Gospel-story more ancient than the text of St. Mark. Other things may follow. Only let us hope that if such a Life were ever to be discovered, the attitude of Christian theologians would not be like that which M. Notovitch suspects on the part of an Italian Cardinal or of the Moravian missionaries at Himis, but that the historical Christ, though different from the Christ of the Gospels, would be welcomed by all who can believe in his teaching, even without the help of miracles.

F. Max Müller.

P.S.----It is curious that at the very time I was writing this paper I received a letter from an English lady dated Leh, Ladakh, June 29. She writes:

We left Leh two days ago, having enjoyed our stay there so much! There had been only one English lady here for over three years. Two German ladies live there, missionaries, a Mr. and Mrs. Weber----a girl, and another English missionary. They have only twenty Christians, though it has been a mission-station for seven years. We saw a polo match which was played down the principal street. Yesterday we were at the great Himis monastery, the largest Buddhist monastery up here----800 Lamas. Did you hear of a Russian who could not gain admittance to the

monastery in any way, but at last broke his leg outside, and was taken in? His object was to copy a Buddhist Life of Christ which is there. He says he got it, and has published it since in French. There is not a single word of truth in the whole story! There has been no Russian there. No one has been taken into the Seminary for the past fifty years with a broken leg! There is no Life of Christ there at all! It is dawning on me that people who in England profess to have been living in Buddhist monasteries in Tibet and to have learnt there the mysteries of *Esoteric Buddhism* are frauds. The monasteries one and all are the most filthy places. The Lamas are the dirtiest of a very dirty race. They are fearfully ignorant, and idolaters *pur et simple;* no----neither pure nor simple. I have asked many travellers whom I have met, and they all tell the same story. They acknowledge that perhaps at the Lama University at Lassa it may be better, but no Englishman is allowed there. Captain Bower (the discoverer of the famous Bower MS.) did his very best to get there, but failed. . . . We are roughing it |522 now very much. I have not tasted bread for five weeks, and shall not for two months more. We have 'chappaties' instead. We rarely get any butter. We carry a little tinned butter, but it is too precious to eat much of. It was a great luxury to get some linen washed in Leh, though they did starch the sheets. "We are just starting on our 500 miles march to Simla. We hear that one pass is not open yet, about which we are very anxious. We have one pass of 18,000 feet to cross, and we shall be 13,000 feet high for over a fortnight; but I hope that by the time you get this we shall be down in beautiful Kulu, only one month from Simla!

The Nineteenth Century, 39 (January-June 1896) pp. 667-677

THE CHIEF LAMA OF HIMIS ON THE ALLEGED 'UNKNOWN LIFE OF CHRIST'

It is difficult for any one resident in India to estimate accurately the importance of new departures in European literature, and to gauge the degree of acceptance accorded to a fresh literary discovery such as that which M. Notovitch claims to have made. A revelation of so surprising a nature could not, however, have failed to excite keen interest, not only among theologians and the religious public generally, but also among all who wish to acquire additional information respecting ancient religious systems and civilisations.

Under these circumstances it was not surprising to find in the October (1894) number of this Review an article from the able pen of Professor Max Müller dealing with the Russian traveller's marvellous 'find.'

I confess that, not having at the time had the pleasure of reading the book which forms the subject of this article, it seemed to me that the learned Oxford Professor was disposed to treat the discoverer somewhat harshly, in holding up the *Unknown Life of Christ* as a literary forgery, on evidence which did not then appear conclusive.

A careful perusal of the book made a less favourable impression of the genuineness of the discovery therein described; but my faith in M. Notovitch was somewhat revived by the bold reply which that gentleman made to his critics, to the effect that he is 'neither a "hoaxer" nor a "forger," ' and that he is about to undertake a fresh journey to Tibet to prove the truth of his story.

In the light of subsequent investigations, I am bound to say that the chief interest which attaches, in my mind, to M. Notovitch's daring defence of his book is the fact that that defence appeared immediately before the publication of an English translation of his work.

I was resident in Madras during the whole of last year, and did not expect to have an opportunity of investigating the facts respecting the *Unknown Life of Christ* at so early a date. Removing to the North-West Provinces in the early part of the present year, I |668 found that it would be practicable during the three months of the University vacation to travel through Kashmir to Ladakh, following the route taken by M. Notovitch, and to spend sufficient time at the monastery at Himis to learn the truth on this important question. I may here mention, *en passant,* that I did not find it necessary to break even a little finger, much less a leg, in order to gain admittance to Himis Monastery, where I am

now staying for a few days, enjoying the kind hospitality of the Chief Lama (or Abbot), the same gentleman who, *according to M. Notovitch*, nursed him so kindly under the painful circumstances connected with his memorable visit.

Coming to Himis with an entirely open mind on the question, and in no way biassed by the formation of a previous judgment, I was fully prepared to find that M. Notovitch's narrative was correct, and to congratulate him on his marvellous discovery. One matter of detail, entirely unconnected with the genuineness of the Russian traveller's literary discovery, shook my faith slightly in the general veracity of the discoverer.

Daring his journey up the Sind Valley M. Notovitch was beset on all sides by 'panthers, tigers, leopards, black bears, wolves, and jackals.' A panther ate one of his coolies near the village of Haïena before his very eyes, and black bears blocked his path in an aggressive manner. Some of the old inhabitants of Haïena told me that they had never seen or heard of a panther or tiger in the neighbourhood, and they had never heard of any coolie, travelling with a European sahib, who had lost his life in the way described. They were sure that such an event had not happened within the last ten years. I was informed by a gentleman of large experience in big-game shooting in Kashmir that such an experience as that of M. Notovitch was quite unprecedented, even in 1887, within thirty miles of the capital of Kashmir.

During my journey up the Sind Valley the only wild animal I saw was a red bear of such retiring disposition that I could not get near enough for a shot.

In Ladakh I was so fortunate as to bag an ibex with thirty-eight-inch horns, called somewhat contemptuously by the Russian author 'wild goats;' but it is not fair to the Ladakhis to assert, as M. Notovitch does, that the pursuit of this animal is the principal occupation of the men of the country. Ibex are now so scarce near the Leh-Srinagar road that it is fortunate that this is not the case. M. Notovitch pursued his path undeterred by trifling discouragements, 'prepared,' as he tells us, ' for the discovery of a Life of Christ among the Buddhists.'

In justice to the imaginative author I feel bound to say that I have no evidence that M. Notovitch has not visited Himis Monastery. On the contrary, the Chief Lama, or Chagzot, of Himis |669 does distinctly remember that several European gentlemen visited the monastery in the years 1887 and 1888.

I do not attach much importance to the venerable Lama's declaration, before the Commissioner of Ladakh, to the effect that no Russian gentleman visited the monastery in the years named, because I have reason to believe that the Lama was not aware at the time of the appearance of a person of Russian nationality, and on being shown the photograph of M. Notovitch confesses that he might have mistaken him for an 'English sahib.' It appears certain that this venerable Abbot could not distinguish at a glance between a Russian and other European or American traveller.

The declaration of the 'English lady at Leh,' and of the British officers, mentioned by Professor Max Millier, was probably founded on the fact that no such name as Notovitch occurs in the list of European travellers kept at the dâk bungalow in Leh, where M. Notovitch says that he resided during his stay in that place. Careful inquiries have elicited the fact that a Russian gentleman named Notovitch was treated by the medical officer of Leh Hospital, Dr. Karl Marks, when suffering not from a broken leg, but from the less romantic but hardly less painful complaint---- toothache.

I will now call attention to several leading statements in M. Notovitch's book, all of which will be found to be definitely contradicted in the document signed by the Chief Superior of Himis Monastery, and sealed with his official seal. This statement I have sent to Professor Max Müller for inspection, together with the subjoined declaration of Mr. Joldan, an educated Tibetan gentleman, to whose able assistance I am deeply indebted.

A more patient and painstaking interpreter could not be found, nor one better fitted for the task.

The extracts from M. Notovitch's book were slowly translated to the Lama, and were thoroughly understood by him. The questions and answers were fully discussed at two lengthy interviews before being prepared as a document for

signature, and when so prepared were carefully translated again to the Lama by Mr. Joldan, and discussed by him with that gentleman, and with a venerable monk who appeared to act as the Lama's private secretary.

I may here say that I have the fullest confidence in the veracity and honesty of this old and respected Chief Lama, who appears to be held in the highest esteem, not only among Buddhists, but by all Europeans who have made his acquaintance. As he says, he has nothing whatever to gain by the concealment of facts, or by any departure from the truth.

His indignation at the manner in which he has been travestied by the ingenious author was of far too genuine a character to be feigned, and I was much interested when, in our final interview, he asked me if in Europe there existed no means of punishing a person |670 who told such untruths. I could only reply that literary honesty is taken for granted to such an extent in Europe, that literary forgery of the nature committed by M. Notovitch could not, I believed, be punished by our criminal law.

With reference to M. Notovitch's declaration that he is going to Himis to verify the statements made in his book, I would take the liberty of earnestly advising him, if he does so, to disguise himself at least as effectually as on the occasion of his former visit. M. Notovitch will not find himself popular at Himis, and might not gain admittance, even on the pretext of having another broken leg.

The following extracts have been carefully selected from the *Unknown Life of Christ,* and are such that on their truth or falsehood may be said to depend the value of M. Notovitch's story.

After describing at length the details of a dramatic performance, said to have been witnessed in the courtyard of Himis Monastery, M. Notovitch writes:

A fter having crossed the courtyard and ascended a staircase lined with prayer-wheels, we passed through two rooms encumbered with idols, and came out upon the terrace, where I seated myself on a bench opposite the venerable Lama, whose eyes flashed with intelligence (p. 110).

(This extract is important as bearing on the question of identification; see Answers 1 and 2 of the Lama's statement: and it may here be remarked that the author's account of the approach to the Chief Lama's reception room and balcony is accurate.) Then follows a long *résumé* of a conversation on religious matters, in the course of which the Abbot is said to have made the following observations amongst others:

We have a striking example of this (Nature-worship) in the ancient Egyptians, who worshipped animals, trees, and stones, the winds and the rain (p. 114).

The Assyrians, in seeking the way which should lead them to the feet of the Creator, turned their eyes to the stars (p. 115).

Perhaps the people of Israel have demonstrated in a more flagrant manner than any other, man's love for the concrete (p. 115).

The name of Issa is held in great respect by the Buddhists, but little is known about him save by the Chief Lamas who have read the scrolls relating to his life (p. 120).

The documents brought from India to Nepal, and from Nepal to Tibet, concerning Issa's existence, are written in the Pâli language, and are now in Lassa; but a copy in our language----that is, the Tibetan----exists in this convent (p. 123).

Two days later I sent by a messenger to the Chief Lama a present comprising an alarum, a watch, and a thermometer (p. 125).

We will now pass on to the description given by the author of his re-entry into the monastery with a broken leg:

I was carried with great care to the best of their chambers, and placed on a bed of soft materials, near to which stood a prayer-wheel. All this took place under the immediate surveillance of the Superior, who affectionately pressed the hand I offered him in gratitude for his kindness (p. 127).

While a youth of the convent kept in motion the prayer-wheel near my bed, |671 the venerable Superior entertained me with endless stories, constantly taking my alarum and watch from their cases, and putting me questions as to their uses, and the way they should be worked. At last, acceding to my earnest entreaties, he ended by bringing me two large bound volumes, with leaves yellowed by time, and from them he read to me, in the Tibetan language, the biography of Issa, which I carefully noted in my *carnet de voyage*, as my interpreter translated what he said (p. 128).

This last extract is in a sense the most important of all, as will be seen when it is compared with Answers 3, 4, and 5 in the statement of the Chief Superior of Himis Monastery. That statement I now append. The original is in the hands of Professor Max Müller, as I have said, as also is the appended declaration of Mr. Joldan, of Leh.

The statement of the Lama, if true----and there is every reason to believe it to be so----disposes once and for ever of M. Notovitch's claim to have discovered a Life of Issa among the Buddhists of Ladakh. My questions to the Lama were framed briefly, and with as much simplicity as possible, so that there might be no room for any mistake or doubt respecting the meaning of these questions.

My interpreter. Mr. Joldan, tells me that he was most careful to translate the Lama's answers verbally and literally, to avoid all possible misapprehension. The statement is as follows:

Question 1. You are the Chief Lama (or Abbot) of Himis Monastery?

Answer 1. Yes.

Question 2. For how long have you acted continuously in that capacity?

Answer 2. For fifteen years.

Question 3. Have you or any of the Buddhist monks in this monastery ever seen here a European with an injured leg?

Answer 3. No, not during the last fifteen years. If any sahib suffering from serious injury had stayed in this monastery it would have been my duty to report the matter to the Wazir of Leh. I have never had occasion to do so.

Question 4. Have you or any of your monks ever shown any Life of Issa to any sahib, and allowed him to copy and translate the same?

Answer 4. There is no such book in the monastery, and during my term of office no sahib has been allowed to copy or translate any of the manuscripts in the monastery.

Question 5. Are you aware of the existence of any book in any of the Buddhist monasteries of Tibet bearing on the life of Issa?

Answer 5. I have been for forty-two years a Lama, and am well acquainted with all the well-known Buddhist books and manuscripts, and I have never heard of one which mentions the name of Issa, and it is my firm and honest belief that none such exists. I have inquired of our principal Lamas in other monasteries of Tibet, and they are not acquainted with any books or manuscripts which mention the name of Issa.

Question 6. M. Nicolas Notovitch, a Russian gentleman who visited |672 your monastery between seven and eight years ago, states that you discussed with him the religions of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, and the people of Israel.

Answer 6. I know nothing whatever about the Egyptians, Assyrians, and the people of Israel, and do not know anything of their religions whatsoever. I have never mentioned these peoples to any sahib.

[I was reading M. Notovitch's book to the Lama at the time, and he burst out with, 'Sun, sun, sun, manna mi dug!' which is Tibetan for, 'Lies, lies, lies, nothing but lies!' I have read this to him as part of the statement which he is to sign----as his deliberate opinion of M. Notovitch's book. He appears perfectly satisfied on the matter. J. A. D.]

Question 7. Do you know of any Buddhist writings in the Pâli language?

Answer 7. I know of no Buddhist writings in the Pâli langage; all the writings here, that I know of, have been translated from Sanskrit and *Hindi* into the Tibetan language.

[From this answer, and other observations of the Lama, it would appear that he is not acquainted with the term 'Pâli.'----J. A. D.]

Question 8. Have you received from any sahib a present of a watch, an alarum, and a thermometer?

Answer 8. I have never received any such presents from any sahib. I do not know what a thermometer is. I am sure that I have not one in my possession.

[This answer was given after a careful explanation of the nature of the articles in question.----J. A. D.]

Question 9. Do you speak Urdu or English?

Answer 9. I do not know either Urdu or English.

Question 10. Is the name of Issa held in great respect by the Buddhists?

Answer 10. They know nothing even of his name; none of the Lamas has ever heard it, save through missionaries and European sources.

Signed in the Tibetan language by the Chief Lama of Himis, and sealed with his official seal.

In the presence of us
J. Archibald Douglas, Professor, Government College, Agra, N.-W. P.
Shahmwell Joldan, late Postmaster of Ladakh.

Himis Monastery, Little Tibet: June 3, 1895.

(Mr. Joldan's Declaration)

This is my declaration: That I acted as interpreter for Professor Douglas in his interviews with the Chief Lama of Hiinis Monastery.

I can speak English, and Tibetan is my native language. The questions and answers to which the Chief Lama has appended his seal and signature were thoroughly understood by him, and I have the fullest confidence in his absolute veracity.

Shahmwell Joldan
(*Retired Postmaster of Ladakh*
under the British Imperial Post Office).

Leh: June *5,* 1895.

This statement and declaration appear conclusive, and they are confirmed by my own inquiries, and by those made in my presence by the Abbot of Hirnis of some of the monks who have been longest resident in the monastery. There is every reason for believing that the conversations with the Lamas of Wokka and Lamayuru originated also in the fertile brain of M. Notovitch.

Neither of these reverend Abbots remembers anything about the Russian traveller, and they know nothing of the religion of Issa (Christianity) or of any Buddhist sacred books or writings which mention his name.

I would here remark that the Lamas of Ladakh are not a garrulous race, and I have never known them indulge in high-flown platitudes on any subject. The casual reader would judge from a perusal of M. Notovitch's 'conversations' with them, that they were as much addicted to pompous generalities as the orators of youthful debating societies. The Lamas I have met are prepared to answer rational inquiries courteously. They do so with brevity, and usually to the point. They confess willingly that their knowledge on religious subjects is limited to their own religion, and that they know nothing whatever of religious systems unconnected with Tibetan Buddhism. They do not read any languages but Sanskrit and Tibetan, and their conversations with foreigners are altogether limited to commonplace topics. The Chief Lama of Himis had never heard of the existence of the Egyptians or of the Assyrians, and his indignation at M. Notovitch's statement that he had discussed their religious beliefs was so real, that he almost seemed to imagine that M. Notovitch had accused him of saying something outrageously improper.

The exclusiveness of the Buddhism of Lassa seems to have instilled into the minds of the Lamaïstes an instinctive shrinking from foreign customs and ideas.

I would call attention especially to the ninth answer in the Lama's statement, in which he disclaims all knowledge of the English and Urdu languages.

The question arises, 'Who was M. Notovitch's interpreter?' The Tibetans of Ladakh competent to interpret such a conversation are leading men, certainly not more than three or four in number. Not one of them has ever seen M. Notovitch, to his knowledge. What does our imaginative author tell about this detail? On page |673 35 of the English edition, we are informed that at the village of Groond (thirty-six miles from Srinagar) he took a *shikari* into his service 'who fulfilled the rôle of interpreter.' Of all the extraordinary statements with which this book abounds, this appears to us the most marvellous. A Kashmiri *shikari* is invariably a simple peasant, whose knowledge of language is limited to his native tongue, and a few words of Urdu and English, relating to the necessities of the road, the camp and sport, picked up from English sportscaen and their Hindu attendants.

Even in his own language no Kashmiri villager would be likely to be able to express religious and philosophical ideas such as are contained in the 'conversations' between M. Notovitch and the Lamas. These ideas are foreign to the Kashmiri mode of thought, usually limited to what our author would term 'things palpable.'

We will take one or two examples:

Part of the spirituality of our Lord (p. 33);
Essential principles of monotheism (p. 51);
An intermediary between earth and heaven (p. 51);

used in the 'conversation' with the Abbot of Wokka on the journey to Leh. The conversations at Himis abound in even more magnificent expressions:

Idols which they regarded as neutral to their surroundings (p. 114);
The attenuation of the divine principle (p. 115);
The dominion of things palpable (p. 115);
A *canonical* part of Buddhism (p. 1:34);

and many others which readers will have no difficulty in finding.

Few things have amused me more, in connexion with this inquiry, than the half-annoyed, half-amused expression of the venerable Lama's face when Mr. Joldan, after a careful explanation from me, did his best to translate into Tibetan, as elegantly as it deserves, the expression 'the attenuation of the divine principle.'

Apart, then, altogether from the statement made by the old Abbot, there are ample reasons for doubting the veracity of M. Notovitch's narrative.

In my last conversation with the Lama we talked of the story of the broken leg. He assured me that no European gentleman had ever been nursed in the monastery while suffering from a broken limb, and then went on to say that no European traveller had ever during his term of office remained at Himis for more than three days. The Abbot called in several old monks to confirm this statement, and mentioned that the hospitality offered by the monastery to travellers is for one night, and is only extended for special reasons by his personal invitation, and that he and his monks would not have forgotten so unusual a circumstance.

That M. Notovitch may have injured his leg after leaving Leh on |674 the road to Srinagar is possible, but the whole story of the broken leg, in so far as it relates to Himis Monastery, is neither more nor less than a fiction.

The Lamaïstes of Ladakh are divided into two great parties: the red monks, or orthodox conservative body; and the yellow monks, a reforming nonconformist sect.

On p. 119 of the *Unknown Life of Christ*, the Lama of Himis, the Chief Superior under the Dalai Lama of the red or orthodox monks of Ladakh, describes himself and his fellow-monks as 'we yellow monks,' in one of those wonderful conversations before alluded to. It would be just as natural for his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, discussing the state of the English Church with an unsophisticated foreigner, to describe himself and the whole bench of bishops as 'we ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist body.' The Russian traveller might have remembered the dark-red robes and the red wallets of the monks who fill the monastery of Himis, unless it be that the Russian author is colour-blind, as well as blind to a sense of truth. The religious differences of these two religious bodies are described with an inaccuracy so marvellous that it might almost seem to be intentional.

Regarded, then, in the light of a work of the imagination, M. Notovitch's book fails to please, because it does not present that most fascinating feature of fiction, a close semblance of probability.

And yet, if I am rightly informed, the French version has gone through eleven editions; so M. Notovitch's effort of imagination has found, doubtless, a substantial reward. In face of the evidence adduced, we must reject the theory generously put forward by Professor Max Müller, that M. Notovitch was the victim of a cunning 'hoax ' on the part of the Buddhist monks of Himis.

I do not believe that the venerable monk who presides over Himis Monastery would have consented to the practice of such a deception, and I do not think that any of the monks are capable of carrying out such a deception successfully. The departures from truth, on other points, which can be proved against M. Notovitch render such a solution highly improbable.

The preface which is attached to the English edition under the form of a letter 'To the Publishers' is a bold defence of the truth of M. Notovitch's story, but it does not contain a single additional argument in favour of the authenticity of the *Life of Issa*.

A work of brilliant imagination is entitled to respect when it confesses itself as such, but when it is boldly and solemnly asserted again and again to be truth and fact, it is rightly designated by a harsher term. The *Life of Issa* is not a simple biography. Such a publication, though a literary forgery, might be considered comparatively harmless. This *Life of Issa* contains two very striking departures from Christian revelation, as accepted by the vast majority of those |675 who confess the faith of Christ. It practically denies the working of miracles, and it also gives a definite denial to the resurrection of Jesus. To the first of these denials is given no less authority than the word's of our Lord, while the second more important article of faith is explained away very much to the discredit of the Apostles of the Early Church. M. Notovitch must remain, therefore, under the burden of what will be in the eyes of many people a more serious charge than literary forgery, and persistent untruthfulness. He has attempted wilfully to pervert Christian truth, and has endeavoured to invest that perversion with a shield of Divine authority.

I am not a religious teacher, and, great as is my respect for Christian missionaries, I cannot profess any enthusiastic sympathy with their methods and immediate aims. M. Notovitch cannot therefore charge me with 'missionary prejudice' or 'obstinate sectarianism.'

But, in the name of common honesty, what must be said of M. Notovitch's statement, that his version of the *Life of Issa* 'has many more chances of being conformable to the *truth* than the accounts of the evangelists, the composition of which, effected at different epochs, and at a time ulterior to the events, may have contributed in a large measure to distort the facts and to alter their sense.'

Another daring departure from the New Testament account is that the blame of Christ's crucifixion is cast on the Roman governor Pilate, who is represented as descending to the suborning of false witnesses to excuse the unjust condemnation of Jesus.

The Jewish chief priests and people are represented as deeply attached to the great Preacher, whom they regarded as a possible deliverer from Roman tyranny, and as endeavouring to save Him from the tyrannical injustice of Pilate. This remarkable perversion of the received account has led several people to ask if the author of the *Unknown Life of Christ* is of Jewish extraction. Such inquiries as I have been able to make are not, however, in favour of such a supposition.

In many respects it may be said that this 'Gospel according to M. Notovitch' bears a resemblance to the *Vie de Jésus* by Renan, to whom the Russian author states that he showed his manuscripts.

We believe, nevertheless, that the great French author possessed too much perspicacity to be deceived by the 'discovery,' and too much honesty to accept support of his views from such a dubious quarter.

The general question as to the probability of the existence of any Life of Issa among the Buddhist manuscripts in the monasteries of Tibet has been already so ably dealt with by so great an authority on these matters as Professor Max Müller, that I feel it would be presumptuous on my part to attempt to deal with a subject in which |676 I am but slightly versed. I will therefore content myself by saying that the statements of the Lama of Himis, and conversations with other Lamas, entirely bear out Professor Max Müller's contention that no such Life of Issa exists in Thibet.

In conclusion, I would refer to two items of the Russian author's defence of his work. The first is that in which he boldly invites his detractors to visit Himis, and there ascertain the truth or falsehood of his story; the second that passage in which he requests his critics 'to restrict themselves to this simple question: Did those passages exist in the monastery of Himis, and have I faithfully reproduced their substance?'

Otherwise he informs the world in general no one has any *'honest'* right to criticise his discovery. I have visited Himis, and have endeavoured by patient and impartial inquiry to find out the truth respecting M. Notovitch's remarkable story, with the result that, while I have not found one single fact to support his statements, all the weight of evidence goes to disprove them beyond all shadow of doubt. It is certain that no such passages as M. Notovitch pretends to have translated exist in the monastery of Himis, and therefore it is impossible that he could have 'faithfully reproduced' the same.

The general accuracy of my statements respecting my interviews with the Lama of Himis can further be borne out by reference to Captain Chevenix Trench, British Commissioner of Ladakh,[2] who is due to visit Himis about the end of the present month, and who has expressed to me his intention of discussing the subject with the Chief Lama.

Before concluding, I desire to acknowledge my sense of obligation to the Wazir of Leh, to the Chief Lama and monks of Himis Monastery, to my excellent interpreter, and to other kind friends in Ladakh, not only for the able assistance which they afforded to me in my investigations, but also for the unfailing courtesy and kind hospitality which rendered so enjoyable my visit to Ladakh.

J. Archibald Douglas.

June 1893.

POSTSCRIPT
BY PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER

Although I was convinced that the story told by M. Notovitch in this *Vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ* [3] was pure fiction, I thought it |677 fair, when writing my article in the October number of this Review, 1894, to give him the benefit of a doubt, and to suggest that he might possib]y have been hoaxed by Buddhist priests from whom he professed to have gathered his information about Issa, *i.e.* Jesus. (Isa is the name for Jesus used by Mohammedans.) Such things have happened before. Inquisitive travellers have been supplied with the exact information which they wanted by *Mahàtmas* and other religious authorities, whether in Tibet or India, or even among Zulus and Red Indians. It seemed a long cry to Leh in Ladakh, and in throwing out in an English review this hint that M. Notovitch might have been hoaxed, I did not think that the Buddhist priests in the Monastery of Himis, in Little Tibet, might be offended by my remarks. After having read, however, the foregoing article by Professor Douglas, I feel bound most humbly to apologise to the excellent Lamas of that monastery for having thought them capable of such frivolity. After the conrplete refutation, or, I should rather say, annihilation, of M. Notovitch by Professor A. Douglas, there does not seem to be any further necessity----nay, any excuse----for trying to spare the feelings of that venturesome Russian traveller. He was not hoaxed, but he tried to hoax us. Mr. Douglas has sent me the original papers, containing the depositions of the Chief Priest of the Monastery of Him is and of his interpreter, and I gladly testify that they entirely agree with the extracts given in the article, and are-signed and sealed by the Chief Lama and by Mr. Joldan, formerly Postmaster of Ladakh, who acted as interpreter between the priests and Professor A. Douglas. The papers are dated Himis Monastery, Little Tibet, June 3, 1894.

I ought perhaps to add that I cannot claim any particular merit in having proved the *Vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ*---- that is, the Life of Christ taken from MSS. in the monasteries of Tibet----to be a mere fiction. I doubt whether any Sanskrit or Pâli scholar, in fact any serious student of Buddhism, was taken in by M. Notovitch. One might as well look for the waters of Jordan in the Brahmaputra as. for a Life of Christ in Tibet.

F. Max Müller.

November 15, 1895.

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1. [1] Nicolas Notovitch, *La Vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ.* (Paris, 1894)

2. [1] This paper was written at Himis in June 1895.----J. A D.

3. [2] Paris: P. Ollendorff, 2[e] éd. 1894.